Claims

1. An apparatus for folding an airbag for a vehicle occupant restraint system, said apparatus comprising a base for said airbag to be folded, a cover for said airbag, a flexible element that is arranged between said base and said cover and has first and second ends, said first end of said flexible element being held between said base and said cover, a traction means that acts upon said second end of said flexible element, and a pressure generating means with which said airbag can be acted upon with compressed gas.

2. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said base and said cover are arranged so as to have a defined distance from each other, said flexible element being a metal strip having a width which corresponds to said distance between said base and said cover.

3. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said first end of said flexible element is firmly attached between said base and said cover.

4. The apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein said base is provided with a receptacle for a holding plate of said airbag and wherein said receptacle is designed in the nature of a sliding guide.

5. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said first end of said flexible element is disposed between said base and said cover in such a way that it can be translatorily shifted.

6. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said traction means is an adjusting cylinder.

7. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said traction means is a cable winch.

8. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said flexible element is provided with a large number of small openings and wherein said pressure generating means is in flow connection with an outside surface of said flexible element.

9. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said pressure generating means is a fan.

10. A method of folding an airbag, in particular by means of an apparatus comprising a base for said airbag to be folded, a cover for said airbag, a flexible element that is arranged between said base and said cover and has first and second ends, said first end of said flexible element being held between said base and said cover, a traction means that acts upon said second end of said flexible element, and a pressure generating means with which said airbag can be acted upon with compressed gas,

said method comprising the following steps:

- said airbag is spread out on said base within an area that is encircled by said flexible element,
- said cover is placed onto said flexible element,
- said airbag is acted upon with pressure,
- said flexible element is pulled together by pulling at its second end, as a result of which said airbag is pushed together.

11. The method according to Claim 10, wherein said first end of said flexible element is affixed in a stationary position.

12. The method according to Claim 10, wherein said first end of said flexible element is translatorily shifted.

13. The method according to Claim 10, wherein a negative pressure is applied to said airbag after it has been pushed together.

14. The method according to Claim 10, wherein said flexible element is pulled together in a force-controlled manner.

15. The method according to Claim 10, wherein said flexible element is pulled together in a displacement-controlled manner.

16. A folded airbag, in particular folded by means of a method comprising the following steps:

said airbag is spread out on a base within an area that is encircled by a flexible element, a cover is placed onto said flexible element, said airbag is acted upon with pressure, said flexible element is pulled together by pulling at a second end thereof, as a result of which said airbag is pushed together,

said airbag having a wall which comprises a large number of chaotically arranged individual folding lines, several main folding lines being present that run in a slightly spiral shape around a center.